

Testimony Re Bill SB 445 & HB 5416

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First, I would like to thank the Environment Committee for the opportunity to express my support of SB 445, the bill regarding pet shops and the selling of puppy mill animals. However, I am very disappointed that the bill does not include language toward stopping the sale of commercially-bred dogs in pet shops. The commercial breeding industry - even at its best - does not maintain humane breeding standards, and Connecticut residents would like to see an end to the sale of puppy mill dogs in pet shops. Please add this language back into the bill before it is proposed legislation.

I am a registered voter in Riverside and I am a member of the CT Council of The Humane Society of the United States.

I am writing in support of this bill as I believe it is long overdue and that the State of CT should not be engaged in the selling of puppy mill puppies in our pet stores for the following reasons:

The cruel and inhumane treatment of these animals has been well documented and should not be tolerated in this State and must be phased out. Over 600 commercial out-of-state breeders supply dogs to 16 Connecticut pet shops (100+ Connecticut pet shops do not sell dogs), breeding under cruel conditions as fast and as furiously as they can for quick profits. Although any breeder with the requisite number of breeding females must be licensed and inspected by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), this requirement provides no assurance of humaneness and is purely a certification that the kennel is engaged in commercial dog breeding. Unfortunately, Connecticut authorities cannot regulate these out-of-state breeders, and the 16 Connecticut pet shops that benefit from the cheap supply of puppies have neither an incentive to rectify the situation nor sufficient influence over these large commercial breeders to do so.

Even with AWA's minimal animal care standards and weak enforcement, breeders supplying Connecticut pet shops have engaged in repeated, significant violations of the AWA. In 2009, Connecticut enacted a law requiring pet shops to identify the hundreds of breeders (and any brokers) supplying their dogs, in turn facilitating disclosure of these breeders' animal care violations. In fact, information from USDA inspection reports submitted to the Task Force revealed that 70% of the USDA-licensed breeders used by Connecticut pet shops have been cited for non-compliance with the AWA within the past 3 years, their violations often involving serious, untreated illness and injury; large accumulations of dog waste; food receptacles thick with grime; insect infestations; failure to provide water; poorly ventilated kennels, including excessively warm temperatures and ammonia-saturated air that burned inspectors' nasal passages; dogs without bedding in frigid temperatures; and dogs living in almost total darkness.

Connecticut pet shops have not implemented sufficient measures to ensure that they are not sourcing puppies from puppy mills. Connecticut pet shop owners who use upwards of 60 and 70 breeders - and in one case, over 160 breeders - testified that they had not personally visited a breeder in several years. On the rare occasion that they had visited a breeder, they testified that they had made no effort to ensure that conditions were any better than the weak AWA animal care standards.

The animal rescue community and local reputable breeders stand willing to provide Connecticut families with puppies. Several rescue organizations testified to the abundance of puppies available to Connecticut adopters. Puppies who need homes sit in shelters both inside the state and just over our borders. I am on the Board of my local shelter in Greenwich and a volunteer at Adopt-A-Dog, our local non-profit

shelter. I know first hand of the abundance of wonderful puppies and adult dogs and cats available for adoption.

Pet retail businesses do not have to sell commercially-bred puppies in order to thrive. Pet shops such as H3 Pet Supply in Stratford and Pet Playhouse in Southington have built successful businesses on the popular public concepts of adoption and rescue, as well as selling food, supplies, and training. Moreover, as noted above, there is a genuine question as to whether there is even a legitimate demand for pet shop puppies given that only a fraction of Connecticut households have purchased dogs from pet shops, with these shops located in just 16 - or less than 10 percent - of Connecticut's 169 towns.

Dogs from high-volume commercial breeding facilities - both the adult breeding dogs and their puppies - frequently have serious health and behavioral issues. Connecticut veterinarians testified before the Task Force that the pet store dogs they had treated had significant and unusual health problems and were not as healthy as dogs from Connecticut breeders, rescue organizations, and shelters. Further, two peer-reviewed studies submitted to the Task Force concluded that high volume commercial breeding facilities are highly injurious to both adult breeding dogs and their puppies, resulting in severe, extensive, and long-term harm to their behavioral and psychological well-being. Importantly from a public health perspective, the studies found that commercially-bred dogs purchased as puppies from pet shops have significantly greater aggression toward human family members, unfamiliar people, and other dogs, and a much greater chance of developing serious behavior problems, as compared to dogs obtained from small, noncommercial breeders.

It is worth noting that both the state and its localities expend significant resources to reduce the supply of unwanted dogs. For instance, in FY 2012, Connecticut's Animal Population Control Program (APCP) spent \$733,199 to reduce the pet population. Yet, 2,700 pets were still euthanized in municipal shelters.

The fact is that the overwhelming majority of Connecticut families do not obtain their dogs from the 16 pet shops that still sell puppies and are more than willing to patronize other sources such as rescue organizations and responsible breeders.

I am also writing in support of a bill to **prohibit the use of pig gestation crates in Connecticut**, as in Section 2 of [HB 5416](#). These are cruel confinement systems for sows that are commonly used in factory farming. No farm owner or operator should be allowed to tether or confine any gestating sow in any enclosure in a manner that prevents such gestating sow from turning around freely, lying down, standing up, or fully extending such gestating sow's limbs. To do any less is horrid abuse and unconscionable. Please support **Section 2** of HB 5416 and help us wipe out this cruel practice.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify and I do hope you will strongly support these important pieces of legislation.

Thank you,

Sherry Wernicke

Riverside, CT